

Remarks at the 10th Annual National Vigil for All Victims of Gun Violence
December 7, 2022

Thank you. I'm sure if the lights were on all of you instead of me, there's a lot of people in this church that I know and have not only consoled one another, but have taken time to console me in the loss of my family.

Jackie, thank you for the introduction. More importantly, thank you for your courage.

Folks, events like this are hard. They're hard for all of you, because it brings back the very moment that everything happened, no matter how many years pass, no matter how many years go by. And it brings it back. But your voices matter. Your voices matter a great deal.

Rector Morgan, thank you for welcoming us to St. Mark's to remember, to heal, and to fulfill a purpose.

Ten years ago, this Nation's vigil was created here in Washington to pray for the souls of Sandy Hook and their families. Ever since this—that time, this church has been opening its doors to more victims and more families of a violence that rips at the very soul—at the very soul—of this Nation.

To all of you here tonight, it's under different circumstances, but I know a little bit what the loss feels like. It will be an anniversary on the 18th of this month that I lost my wife and daughter and nearly lost my two sons when a tractor trailer broadsided them. And it's not long after that, the anniversary of losing my son. I know that feeling.

Everyone is different, but I know that feeling. You know, it's like a black hole in the middle of your chest you're being dragged into. And you never know if there's ever a way out. And what I admire so much about all of you is, you show up and remember, because remembering brings it back—the very moment that it happened.

But all of you, and all of you at the time—and I spent several days up at Sandy Hook and then went back—at the time, it was astounding to see, even then, the courage that was represented. Jill and I met with you, prayed with you, and have worked with you. We've seen you turn pain into purpose. Together, we've made some important progress: the most significant gun law passed in 30 years, but still not enough. *[Applause]* Still not enough.

Even as our work continues to limit the number of bullets can be in a cartridge, the type of weapon that can be purchased and sold, the attempt to ban assault weapons, a whole range of things that are just common sense. Just simple common sense.

But you know, we did it before. You may remember. In the nineties, we did it with the help of the very people in here, led by Speaker Pelosi in the House and many others. And we did it. And guess what? It worked. The number of violent and mass murders reduced were significant. A lot of people's lives were saved. You know—and we can do it again.

Scripture says, "The light shines in darkness, and darkness has not overcome it." To all of you here tonight, you are the light. You are literally the light. And your loved ones, your friends, they're the light. And they'll always be with you, no matter what happens. They're always with you.

How many of you ask yourself, "What would my son or daughter want me to do at this moment"? They're in your heart. They're part of you. They're always going to be with you.

And, at this national vigil for victims of gun violence, I ask the country to join me in a moment of silence to remember every one of them.

[At this point, a moment of silence was observed.]

And we ask God to give us the strength to finish the work left undone done on behalf of the lives we've lost and all the lives we can save.

May God bless you all and keep you safe.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:20 p.m. at St. Mark's Episcopal Church. In his remarks, he referred to Jackie Hegarty, survivor of the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, on December 12, 2012; and Michele H. Morgan, rector, St. Mark's Episcopal Church.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : National Vigil for All Victims of Gun Violence, 10th Annual.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Jill T.; Biden, R. Hunter; Hegarty, Jackie; Morgan, Michele H.; Pelosi, Nancy.

Subjects: Connecticut, 2012 shooting in Newtown; Federal Assault Weapons Ban; Gun control efforts; Gun violence, prevention efforts; Speaker of the House of Representatives; Vigil for All Victims of Gun Violence, National.

DCPD Number: DCPD202201101.